

## Garden of Eden 2

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### Part 4

Sabine felt the wind get knocked out of her and falling to the ground. A sharp pain rushed through her head, and all she could feel was something heavy lying on top of her. Before she blacked out she muttered,

"Damned horse, must be layin' on me..."

She felt something cold on her head. It felt like the grime on top of swamp water you found in the back woods near her father's plantation. If someone had put it on her while she had been sleeping, they would feel it flying right back at them! But wait, she was dead, right? There are no swamps in Heaven. Of course, Heaven was where she was...hopefully. God really couldn't have held it against her for putting that bullfrog in Mother's soup. It was only a joke! She tried to sit up, but she couldn't seem to open her eyes.

"Bull frog..." she whispered, "...only a joke..." Then something pushed her down, and she was too weak to fight it. She finally gave up and slept some more.

Kitty looked at her mistress. Poor thing didn't see what was coming. Even she hadn't seen the horse until the last minute. If only it were her in the street and not Sabine. She would have that awful lump on the back of her head and not her mistress. Thank God he had shown up at the right moment. She looked up at the stranger.

"Will she be alright?" he asked.

"She should be, milord. But she will have quite a headache when she

awakes." Kitty stood and moved away from the bed to soak another towel in some iced water. The stranger loomed over Sabine. He seemed to study her features with great interest. He was an odd one, thought Kitty. She had never seen a man like him before. If he hadn't thrown himself at Sabine just before the horse came upon her, she would have been killed. Sabine had landed hard though and was knocked unconscious. The stranger hadn't even offered his name as he helped take Sabine and Kitty home in his carriage. Smythe nearly blacked out too when he saw the stranger enter the Essex townhouse carrying Sabine. Kitty had to admit that he was extremely gentle with her though. He was handsome, too. Sabine would be happy, Kitty thought as she chuckled. She moved towards the bed again and placed a new towel upon Sabine's head. Her mistress swatted at her again, and kept mentioning 'bull frogs.' Lordy, that must have been quite a blow to the head.

"Milord, I cannot thank-you enough for saving my mistress. It was as if God sent you from Heaven to save her at the last moment!"

The stranger focused now on the maid. He knew they were not from England. First of all, no sane woman would be out with her maid shopping. Second, no sane person would stand in the middle of a bustling London road trying to wave down a hack. And lastly, their speech was quite different. Sounded American to him.

"Yes, indeed. I am only too happy to help such beautiful women in distress," he smiled. Kitty liked this one. He was actually kind, unlike that dreadful Lord Essex with his cold gray eyes. The stranger possessed the most beautiful pair of eyes she had ever seen. The color was magnificent. They were bluer than the deepest parts of the ocean. His face was strong and his body lithe. Muscles were all in the right places. His hair was long and held back in a low ponytail. Yet the color was astonishing! The man could have been no older than 35. Yet, his hair was a startling white!

"I am sure the mistress would like to thank-you for your kindness as soon as she is up to it. My lady is very kind."

"Unfortunately, it seems that your lady is unused to the ways of London yet."

"No, milord. We are fresh from America, and everything there is drastically different from England."

"Well, do you have a name?"

Kitty curtsied, "Yes milord! My name is Katherine. But everyone calls me Kitty."

"And your mistress?" he beamed down at her. He was a good 7 inches taller than Kitty.

"Her name is Lady Sabine St. James."

"Excellent."

"Sir?" Kitty stood before him perplexed. He strode over to the door and opened it halfway before turning back to look at her.

"Tell Lady St. James that I will be calling upon her to see how her

health is coming along."

"And may I ask whom would be calling?"

"Magnus...Joseph Magnus," he honored her with another heart-melting smile, then turned and strode away. Kitty kept her eyes on the door as she sat next to Sabine. She blindly reached over and grabbed the iced towel from her mistress' and began wiping her forehead.

Kitty let out a heart-felt sigh, "I think the adventure has just started, milady."

## Part 5

Over the next few days, Sabine and her new escort, Joseph, ventured all throughout London. Sabine could have never believed her savior to be so...so...manly, handsome, kind, and intelligent. The list could go on, but all she could think about was how to get him to look at her with those magnetic blue eyes. The other day, when they rode his horses into the park, she had noticed him watching her from the corner of her eye. Maybe she wouldn't have to wait for the Season to start before she chose a husband. Sabine smiled deviously. Yes, she was beginning to see the bright side of being in London. It wasn't so bad.

"Where are you off to today?" Kitty stood in front of Sabine's armoire attempting to figure out what to dress her mistress in.

"Well, I am not too sure. We talked of visiting some gardens around London....ohhhh, I forgot the name already. But then we spoke of riding out to the countryside. He said that it would be a short ride to his country estate outside of London. He has his stables there. So maybe I should wear my blue riding habit to match his eyes!" Sabine put her hand over her heart and faked a faint. She smiled deliciously thinking of her Joseph. He hadn't even asked to escort her exclusively yet. But if he asked, she would say yes, yes, a thousand times yes!

"Look at you! Twittering about like an air-headed chit! Bah! You should act as if you have no interest in him. Men hate that! It only draws them to you more." Kitty began dressing Sabine. She didn't even answer Kitty. Her mind was on other matters. She could feel the growing excitement deep down in her belly.

Kitty began putting Sabine's gorgeous, auburn hair into a chignon. Sabine could hardly keep still. She wanted to be off!

"Could you hurry, Kitty? He is supposed to be here in five minutes! I don't want him to wait!"

"You will sit still, or I will shear off your lovely hair! It must be perfect!!" Kitty put every strand into place. "Milady, do be careful. What if Lord Essex were to come back? If he found out you were being escorted about London by a man he did not approve of, he could beat you!"

"He would not!"

"And how do you know that?"

"Because you would not let him!" Sabine laughed prettily. There was a knock to her bedroom door.

"Lord Magnus is here, milady," Smythe announced. Sabine rushed out of her room and down the stairs. "Do be careful milady!" Smythe called after her.

"It seems as if you have adjusted fairly well to London," Magnus smiled.

"I suppose I have. I still miss America though," Sabine answered quickly. She was absorbing all the sites from the carriage window. They were going to his estates in the country for the day. Sabine had to admit that the countryside was quite breathtaking. There were forests everywhere with birds singing from almost every branch. The air was refreshing and warm upon her skin. It was the kind of air that she was used to, country air. Suddenly she ducked her head back into the carriage remembering that ladies do not hang out of carriages like drooling dogs. She flushed and avoided Magnus' gaze.

"You do enjoy the country, do you not?" he asked.

"Quite. I lived in the country in America all my life."

"Would you ever consider living here in England?"

TouchÃ©, Sabine thought. What a wonderful way for him to get me to admit that I like him! Indeed! The nerve of him. She could play this game.

"No."

"No?"

"No. I could not."

Magnus frowned and rubbed his chin. She was a mighty stubborn girl. But he had never come across a girl like this before and couldn't possibly let her get away. There was something about her...

"Do you know that the Season is about to begin, Lady St. James?"

"Please, call me Sabine! We have known each other for some time now. And yes, I did know. I only have another week to prepare. I've never been to any. Hopefully I won't end up dancing by myself," she added coyly.

He smiled and winked, "Hopefully."

The afternoon went by pleasantly. Sabine rode a Chestnut mare, while Magnus rode astride a Bay stallion. Joseph's country estate was lovely with its rose gardens and Romanesque statues. The estate was located between two hamlets along a lonely road. It appeared to Sabine that Magnus quite enjoyed losing himself in the peace and quiet of the country. Yet she could not find that same emotion. She wanted to ride like the wind upon a livelier horse! But oh! She was stuck; riding next to Magnus and learning the names to over a hundred

different kinds of plants and flowers. This was not the kind of afternoon that she had expected. It was time she took the matter into her own hands.

"And that, my dear, is the reason why we call the tree a Weeping Willow."

"That was all quite fascinating, milord!" Sabine prayed that God would forgive her for lying. They both grew quiet and began steering their way back towards the house.

Sabine bit her lip and mulled over the idea of what she was about to do. She looked to the horizon; they were almost at the house. She had to do this now!

"Milord?" she looked directly at him with a shy smile.

He looked at her questioningly, "Yes?"

"Please forgive me," she drew her horse right next to his.

"For what?"

"This!" She threw her arms around his neck and kissed him. He drew back for a moment, not knowing how to react. Then slowly she could feel his arms encircling her waist and lifting her onto his horse.

The kiss was sweet. Sabine had kissed only one boy before. What a disaster that was! The boy had fainted dead away! But Magnus had not. He kept his lips against hers and began to lightly run his tongue over her lips. Sabine welcomed him and kissed him back just as passionately. The kiss, Sabine mused, reminded her of a calming summer shower; not what she had wanted. She had always thought that when she kissed the man of her dreams, it would turn her world upside down. But no, not this.

"LADY SABINE ST. JAMES!" roared a voice. The couple quickly drew away from each other and looked up in the direction from which the bellow had come from.

"Dear Lord!" Sabine gasped, "Lord Essex!" There he stood with his hands balled into tight fists at his side. He had seen the whole act from the front of the manor. Damned Kitty for jinxing her! Sabine scrambled out of Magnus's embrace and ungracefully dumped herself onto the ground. Essex began to approach them with lightening speed. Magnus dismounted and placed himself in front of her, "I shall deal with your uncle, Lady Sabine."

"No!" she stood next to him. "I shall speak with him. It is I who took advantage of you," she patted his arm as if she had somehow hurt him with the kiss.

Viscount Nathaniel Essex strode up to Lord Joseph Magnus until they were toe-to-toe. They stood at about the same height and glared into one another's eyes. Sabine thought they looked as if they were about to fight each other like dogs.

"Lord Magnus, I presume," Essex hissed.

"And you must be the infamous Viscount of Essex."

"I that you have wasted no time in seducing my niece," Essex turned his head to glare at Sabine. She pressed her lips into a thin line and was about to yell in defense of Joseph, but Essex yelled first. "I do not want to hear a word from you yet, young lady!" He turned his attention back to Magnus, " I should challenge you right this moment to save my niece's reputation! I should kill you at dawn."

"Challenge me and you may be the one who ends up with blood on his shirt," Magnus growled.

Sabine had had enough! She forced herself in between the two men and shoved them apart before they got into a physical fight right there.

"Both of you stop! It was my fault that I kissed Lord Magnus, dear uncle! If anyone should be punished it should be me!"

Essex stood back and carefully assessed the situation. He looked at Magnus, then back down at Sabine. A plan was forming....

"Sabine I shall deal with you when we get home! Now get yourself into the carriage and wait for me!" He shot her look that dared her to defy him. Sabine's hackles were raised, but she knew when she was bested. She straightened her shoulders and gracefully walked away from them and towards the waiting Essex carriage.

Magnus kept his gaze on her until she was safely out of earshot, "I have waited many years to get the chance to kill you Essex!"

"And I you Magnus!"

"At dawn tomorrow, I shall avenge my people for the horrible experiments you did on them! I will watch you bleed to death and speed you on your way to Hell!"

"What was so horrible about seeing how new chemicals reacted on human bodies? They were merely peasants from your village. They came to me for cures, so I tested new ones on them. I tried, Magnus. You know I did." Essex smiled as he recalled the memories of the people screaming in agony.

"At dawn, on my estate Essex. You will die!"

"I shall be here only to watch you bleed to death Magnus!" With that, Essex turned on his heel and strode to the carriage.

"And if you hurt Sabine," Magnus called from behind, "I shall make you suffer!"

"I will keep that in mind, Joseph!" Essex waved from the carriage window.

Sabine could feel the tension already. Essex glared at her. Lord, he looked like her mother when she was about to throttle her. Sabine bit her lip and lowered her gaze. Surely, he would not beat her...would he?

"As for you Sabine," Essex growled, "you shall receive your punishment when we arrive back home. I am too weary to deal with a twittering chit like you. But believe me, the punishment shall definantly fit the crime."

Sabine shuddered as he smiled and revealed his fang-like teeth. What was she going to do?

## Part 6

Sabine was grabbed by the arm and dragged into the townhouse. The pain caused from Essex's grip did not bother her. Instead she had cringed from the sheer coldness from his hand. 'How could he even be below room temperature?' Sabine mused. Essex hurled open the door and shoved Sabine in. There was no sign of the servants anywhere. Not even good old Smythe. Something was terribly wrong. The Viscount grabbed her around the waist with one arm and carried her upstairs to her chambers.

"Put me down!" Sabine kicked her legs and swung her arms violently. She was never manhandled like this before! How dare he! "Ah said put me down!" She swung her fist and slammed it right into his face. She yowled in pain! Her hand felt like it had hit a brick wall. Essex threw her into her room face first and slammed the door shut. He loomed over her as she rubbed her ribs from falling on them. Dear Lord! He was ten times worse than her mother had ever been! She tried to stand, but her dress created a tangled web in her feet and caused her to fall again. So instead, she rolled over and glared up at him. He rubbed his cheek where she had slugged him. "Ah hope yah' get a bruise on yo' face suh'! Ya deserve it!" she hissed up at him.

"That is the most disgusting accent I have ever heard!" he said as he approached her. She tried to scramble away from him, but he picked her up again. Preparing herself for another flight across the room, she grabbed onto his shirt intending to take him with her. "You silly chit! What were you thinking by trouncing across London with a total stranger?!" He actually placed her on her feet and stalked around her in a circle.

Sabine crossed her arms and stuck her chin out defiantly, "He saved mah' life! Ah' have nevah' met a kindah' gentleman in all mah' life!"

"Talk like a Englishwoman!" he roared.

"He was the only person willing to befriend me! He showed me London, when you should have. At least he was here. And he wasn't even my family!"

"You knew I had business to attend to! A business that is much more important than any family tie!"

"Speak fo' yo'self," she countered. She had purposely used her accent to upset him. And Lordy, she could see that he was about as happy as a wet hen.

"If you refuse to speak like a proper English lady, then I shall have to sow your lips shut! And do not dare think that I will not go through with it!" He kept walking in a circle around her, almost like

an animal would circle it's prey before the kill. This time Sabine kept quiet, but she kept her sparkling, emerald eyes on him. "Good! Now, as I was saying, you did not have my permission to go out about London with anyone! The Season is starting soon, and only the Lord knows which members of the ton could have seen you with Magnus! They all know we share an animosity towards one another. And just think of the harm done to your reputation! Now I will have to deal with him myself!" He stopped circling in front of her.

"You said that nothing would happen!" she yelled. He smiled at her.

"I never said that," he said with devilish enjoyment.

"Please! Don't do anything, dear uncle. It was all my fault! Punish me, not him," she pleaded to him.

"It is obvious that you care for this fiend." The Viscount pursed his lips thoughtfully and rubbed his chin again. "What, oh what shall I do?"

"Please Uncle Nathaniel, do not do anything rash."

Essex walked towards the door and spoke with his back to her, "Your punishment will be for you to be confined to your room until the Season begins. You will receive no callers and speak to no one within the household...including your maid, Kitty." With that he left the room and locked her door. Sabine screeched and ran to the door. She banged on it and yelled for him to come back. Not even Kitty answered her wails.

"What have ah' gotten mah'self into?" she wept.

Sabine had fallen asleep crying at the foot of her door, until she heard someone coming up the stairs towards her room. She stood quickly hoping that someone would come to rescue her. The door did not budge. She heard some shuffling and held her breath. Suddenly a letter was slipped under her door, and the mystery person could be heard running back down the stairs. Sabine dove towards the letter and opened it quickly.

My Lady,

I am truly sorry about your imprisonment. All the servants here were given strict instructions not to communicate with you. I miss you terribly already! I wrote you this note to tell you of what I observed earlier this day. Lord Essex had left the house before dawn and had met another man outside of the house. Then they left quickly on horseback. I was curious as to what was happening, so Smythe and I went into the lord's solar. We could find nothing but an empty gun case.

Then later this morning, we watched him return with a bloodstain on his left shoulder. He was gripping his shoulder, and he seemed to be somewhat dazed from the blood that he was losing. Then he retreated into his room, and has been there ever since. None of the servants know what has happened.

Mary shall be around shortly with your meal. Please write to me so that I know that you are all right.



Love Kitty

"Blood?" Sabine whispered to herself. What had happened?

Part 7

Sabine was at least allowed to see the seamstress that long week. Now she had several new dresses to talk to when she wasn't talking to the walls. Lord how she missed civilization! Not being able to touch anyone, talk to them, or even see them was torture. But it was Sunday! And the first ball was tomorrow night. Essex just had to let her out into the house tonight. It simply wasn't fair. And she missed Joseph terribly. Everyday she thought about him and how he was fairing. She would even be delighted to receive one of his light-hearted kisses. His blue eyes had haunted her mind day and night. As soon as she was out of this damned house, she would go to the ball and announce to one and all that she was going to marry Lord Joseph Magnus. So what if even Joseph didn't know yet. Sabine was sure he wanted to marry her, too.

The day passed by and still no one had come to free her. She slept on until Monday afternoon. Sabine just lay in her bed hoping to die. There was no way her uncle was letting her out until either she was dead or Joseph was.

"Still in bed?" Essex boomed. Sabine sat straight up. She could not believe her eyes; it was another living person! Well, she didn't want to see this particular person alive, but it would have to do. "Get up! There is a ball tonight and you must begin to prepare."

"Of course, Uncle! I shall be ready," she answered obediently. She cocked her head to one side. Essex looked as if he were in pain everytime he moved his right arm. What had happened?

"You may take your afternoon meal with me within the hour," he said. He glared at her as if she had grown a second head, then retreated out of the room. The door was left open. Sabine smiled and jumped to her feet. Then Kitty poked her head inside.

"Milady!" Kitty ran in and embraced her friend. "That cruel man! How have you been fairing? Let me look at you! You have grown so pale by not being in the sun! We must catch up. Come and sit while I get your bath drawn for you," Kitty walked to the door and yelled for the chambermaids to bring up a bath.

Sabine had never been so pampered in her life. All the servants had stopped to talk to her as she walked throughout the house. They all asked if they could do anything for her to make up for their master's cruel streak. Sabine merely smiled and assured them that she was well. Her afternoon meal was quite boring. Essex had just instructed her how to act in front of the other nobility at the ball. He had to have been her mother in disguise! They shared the same mind! But soon it was nightfall, and Sabine was prepared for her first Season. Kitty had dressed her in a lovely jade gown to match her mistress' emerald eyes. The waist of the dress forced everything north farther northward until Sabine felt as if she was spilling out of her dress. But Kitty had assured her that that was the style in London. Sabine's beautiful hair was left to cascade down her back, and it framed her face perfectly. Now she was ready.

Essex awaited her at the foot of the stairs while the ever-valiant Smythe stood behind him like a shadow. Sabine carefully walked down the stairs as she was taught and stood in front of her uncle for inspection. Essex looked at her for a moment then reached into his breast pocket. He had pulled out a diamond necklace and placed it around Sabine's neck. Light reflected off the tiny stars and Sabine gasped.

"Uncle! Surely you cannot let me wear such an expensive piece of jewelry!"

"Yes I can. Your mother had it sent to you, and it arrived a few days ago. She carefully instructed me to let you wear it to your first ball." Essex turned to Smythe and grabbed his gloves. He then offered his arm. Sabine looked over at Smythe, and he gave her a slow wink. She looked back at her uncle and took his arm. "We are off then! I promise you that you shall have a wondrous evening, Sabine."

"I truly hope that I do Uncle," she said through gritted teeth. How dare he act as if nothing had happened! He had kept her prisoner in her own room for a week! She would pay him back for that; surely there was something at the ball to ruin him.

They had stepped out of the carriage. Sabine gawked at the mansion where the ball was being held. The Duke and Duchess of Leicester always held the first ball of the Season. They had the largest estates in England just below the King himself. Sabine had never seen such extravagance: the chandeliers, marble, statues, flowing champagne, crystal, paintings, vases, gardens, and the amount of servants!

Essex and Sabine walked up the steps into the mansion. There was a line to be introduced to the ball as you entered. Four young girls and their parents were ahead of them. The growing pressure on Essex's arm forced him to look over at Sabine. Her eyes were large, her breath was short, and she seemed to be perspiring. Sabine was terrified.

"Will you be alright?"

Sabine nervously smiled to no one in particular and kept her eyes straight ahead, "I will be, Uncle Nathaniel. I just hope I do not trip on my dress or slip on the stairs going down into the ballroom."

He placed a crushing grip on top of her hand, "Do not embarrass me!" Sabine snapped her head up at him. Anger began boiling deep within her. Why did everyone always seem to believe that she was going to embarrass them? Damn him! She would be the most eloquent and graceful lady here; then she would ruin him. Ha!

"I shall endeavor not to Uncle." There were only two more to be introduced before them, then one, and finally, it was their turn.

"I hate coming to 'dese damned balls. All 'de girls 'ere are sixteen or younger! Merde, how am I suppose to 'ave fun wit' children?" The Duke d'Orleans hissed under his breath.

"Well if you were not so caught up in bedding all the women over the

age of twenty, milord, you would have found a wife long ago," said the Earl of Bristol.

The Earl had been attending balls for the last three years searching for the perfect heiress to wed. Unfortunately he always had his dear friend, the Duke d'Orleans, come along. If he had to suffer, they both would.

They had met years ago when they were both boys. The Earl had traveled to France to travel the continent. As he was learning the architecture of Paris, he had run into a mischievous little devil named Remy. Actually Remy had run into him and had stolen one of his books on architecture. This was not a problem for the Earl because he loathed buildings in general; yet he was angered enough to follow the scoundrel into an alley. There he had discovered Remy giving the book to a young girl. She had embraced Remy and thanked him because she was too poor to buy a book. The Earl had confronted Remy as he left the alleyway, and one thing led to another and a fistfight ensued. Soon two well-dressed men pulled the Earl off of Remy and had announced that he had just clobbered the Duke d'Orleans. The Earl could have been killed for such an insult, but the scoundrel had merely put his arm around him and acted as if they were they greatest of friends. And from then on, they were.

"I 'ave not bedded 'dat many Englishwomen!" Remy announced.

The Earl smiled, "Of course not. Yet you are not adding in all the Frenchwomen either." Remy laughed heartily. "Truly though Remy, we must find ourselves some wives."

"Speak fo' yo'self, hommes. I not lookin' for trouble."

"But you do need money ever since you left France. If it were not for the growing hatred from peasants, you would still be a wealthy man."

"Can you blame 'dem 'dough? 'Dey 'ave no money, no respect, no freedom. Plus, I be 'appy living off you, hommes!" he chuckled merrily.

"True. But you forget my funds are dwindling, and all the heiresses are drawn to you and not me."

The Duke gave him a dashing smile, " 'Dey know when a man got a good pair o'..."

"Remy! Look at who is here.... and who is that girl with him?" The Earl pointed to the top of the stairway. Remy turned and looked up. His breath was caught in his throat. That was the most beautiful girl he had ever seen! She looked like a fairy princess.

The butler turned towards the crowd and announced "The Viscount of Essex and his niece, Lady Sabine St. James!" A hush swept the crowd as they gazed at Sabine. Then the silence became thunderous. Sabine quickly curtsied to the gawking crowd, then turned to her left and bowed to the Duke and Duchess. No one moved.

Part 8

Sabine was about to burst into tears! She had not expected this kind

of reaction from the ton. Maybe some laughing and pointing, but not this deadening silence. All that could be heard was the orchestra in the far corner of the ballroom. And now their music was coming to a stop. Damn! Sabine quickly looked up at her uncle to see what to do. His cold gaze pierced her, and she looked down immediately.

"My dear welcome to England!" The Duke strode over to her and embraced her. The crowd began murmuring. "I hear that you have traveled all the way from America to attend your first Season here! I cannot express how pleased I am to have found that out. Usually people from America choose to stay there and breed with the commoners."

Sabine automatically opened her mouth to give her speech on equality, but Essex tightened his grip on her hand. The Duke beamed down at her, "But look at me! I am keeping you from enjoying the dancing and gossip! Go meet the rest of the ton."

"Thank-you, milord, for inviting me to your wonderful ball," she replied quite timidly.

The Duke looked up at Essex with a grand smile. "She is quite the lady, Essex. Who would have known you were to be so fortunate as to have her in your family?"

"I quite agree, milord," he smiled back. Luckily, no one heard the quiet snort from Sabine as she heard her uncle's reply. What a lie that was!

They proceeded down the stairway into the now chattering crowd. Soon young bachelors surrounded Sabine. They all questioned her of how her life was in America, and, surprisingly, if she had been spoken for yet. Sabine answered each question directly and kept her chin up and looked at their faces. She noticed that the rest of the women spoke to the ground when a man approached them or hid behind fans. She would show them all what American women were made of! Yet, as each young man approached her, she kept a look out for Joseph. Surely he would come to see her now that she was out in the open. Her eyes carefully searched among the crowd. Where was he?

"I am going to go and introduce myself," the Earl straightened his coat and licked his lips. Remy grabbed his shoulder and practically threw the Earl behind him.

"I don' t'ink so. She is mine!"

Sabine was suddenly swept away into a waltz with one of the young men surrounding her. She looked up into a chubby face with slits for eyes. His hair had been slicked back with some kind foul smelling oil, and he stepped on her toes every now and then.

"Have we been introduced, milord?" Sabine tried to put some space between them by squirming out of his arms.

"My name is Winston. I am the Baron of Swindon. You caught my eye as you were walking into the ballroom, and I had to speak to you immediately."

"But my uncle will become upset if he does not see me! I will gladly talk to you back near the group of gentlemen." She let go of his

shoulders and began to turn, but he held firmly onto her.

"I must tell you this away from the crowd, Lady Sabine..."

"Lady St. James," she corrected him.

"Yes, Lady St. James...I just had to tell you that you stole my heart as soon as your presence entered the room!" he declared passionately.

Lord! She would love to see her Uncle right about now. This was getting to be too much. Where was Joseph? Sabine looked back into the baron's face. His pudginess was too overwhelming for her.

"Milord?"

"Yes, my love?"

"I am growing quite thirsty. Would you mind getting me some punch while I wait for you near...", she scanned the room, "...the balcony?"

His face brightened, "Of course milady!" He swirled her over to the opened balcony windows and left to get her refreshment. She inhaled deeply trying to get the acrid smell of the oil out of her nose. Sabine looked up and saw the gaggle of men approaching her again. Damned it all! She just wanted to watch the crowd and learn of what went on at balls! Not be trampled by overzealous men!

Then she felt something behind her; not quite touching her, but she more or less felt a presence there. To her astonishment the herd of men stopped in their tracks and began to dissipate. What had caused that? She turned around.

"Oh mah' Lord!" she whispered. She had just looked into the most beautiful hazel eyes she had ever seen in her whole life.

"Well, I 'ave never been called 'dat b'fore, but it is nice t'know I am t'ought of in 'dat way," he laughed as he gazed down at her.

Sabine couldn't move; she was literally frozen in that exact spot. She didn't want to move because if she did, this angel may have flown away. He was so handsome! His long brown hair was tied back with a few short strands of hair escaping to add to his beauty. She could not help but to stare at his face. He was truly beautiful!

He could not help but to stare at her face. She was magnificent! Her auburn hair tumbled down her back and over her shoulders. Her eyes were emeralds that must have surely belonged to a goddess. Her skin was flawless; it reminded him of...

"Peaches and cream," he murmured.

Sabine was suddenly awakened from her dream and blinked, "Excuse me sir?"

"I 'ave been rude. Please allow me t'introduce myself; my name is Remy Lebeau," he bowed to her.

She giggled. Sabine quickly threw her hand up over her mouth. She had giggled like a little girl! What a fool she was! He was just another man, a very handsome and charming man, but all the same, he was just another man. "I am pleased to meet you sir."

Then she curtsied to him, but instead he swept her hand into his and led her out farther onto the balcony. "I do not think it would be wise for me to be out here alone with a man, sir."

"Please, call me Remy."

She then noticed that he had been speaking with an accent. Who was this archangel? "I noticed that you are not from around here. I have not heard a person with your accent before."

"Ahhh yes," he smiled again. "I am from 'de continent. From France. I heard from 'de gossips 'dat you be from America."

"Yes, milord. I come from Virginia."

"You are quite interesting, mon chere."

"You do not even know me!"

"I see it all in yo' eyes, chere."

She could actually feel the blush rising into her face. This man made her feel like a girl all over again! No one had ever made her feel like that. A slow, catlike smile crept onto her delicious red lips. Remy's heart almost stopped! She was so beautiful; he just knew she was going to be his. There was something special about her; he just couldn't put his finger on it.

She lifted her defiant little chin, "I must get back inside before anyone notices our little interlude, Lord Lebeau." She backed away from him and curtsied again. "If you wish though, I will dance with you later on this evening." His arms came around her just then, and he swept her into a dance.

"Why not you an' me jus' start dancing now, chere?" They danced their way back into the ballroom, losing themselves within the other dancers.

The Viscount of Essex saw them enter. He held his glass of champagne in one hand while the other was clenched into a fist behind his back. So the girl wished so ruin her reputation with that scoundrel? So be it. Essex drank his champagne and carefully watched his prey.

"Come now, Lady Sabine, tell me more about yo'self," Remy chuckled. Sabine noticed that he always seemed to be laughing. But his laughter was not false; he was actually enjoying himself. "How were you so unlucky as t' 'ave an uncle like 'da Viscount?"

"You know of him?"

"Don' everyone?"

"Well, he is the brother to my mother. They both share the same disposition, though. I believed that I would be escaping my mother's

foul temper when I arrived in England. Yet my uncle squashed any hope of that."

"Chere, let me make you forget yo' troubles," he whispered in her ear. Her heart skipped three beats before she was able to breathe again.

"I don't believe I know what you're talking about, milord."

He flashed a devilish smile at her, "I was jus' wonderin' if I could escort you aroun' London so 'dat you wouldn' 'ave to put up wit' yo' uncle. What were you t'inkin' 'bout, mon ami?"

Sabine could not have felt any more foolish than she did in that moment. Of course she thought that he was making an indecent proposal, but he was merely asking to escort her about London! Where was her mind? "Oh, nothing milord. Actually I had thought of someone else for a moment." And she truly had. Where was Joseph? And what would he do if he saw her dancing with Lord Lebeau? True, Joseph and she had merely shared a kiss, but she had never declared any love towards him. The kiss was purely out of...lust? No that was not lust. Seeing Remy and knowing what she had felt afterwards was true lust, and now it was ruling her mind! Damn!

"You 'ave a man in yo' t'oughts?"

"Well..., " she hesitated, "yes, I did."

Remy frowned. Was she already taken with another? "If I be intrudin' upon you and yo' love, 'den I am sorry," he began to stop dancing and loosened his grip.

Sabine panicked! Her love? No! She held onto his shoulders tightly, preventing him from all escape and swung him back into a waltz. "Ah was just thinkin' of a friend, suh'! Ya' don't have ta' jump ta' conclusions."

Remy was taken aback. He had never felt an iron grip like this from any woman! And she also had a curiously sensual accent. It was like warmed brandy. "You 'ave a beautiful accent, Lady Sabine. I 'ave heard about southern belles."

Damn! She forgot to control her accent, and now he knew. Then she smiled again. He had said that it was beautiful.

To be continuedâ€|â€|â€|

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